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EDITORIAL

Transmitting Our Literary Heritage

by W. KRISTJANSON

The Icelandic people are traditionally noted for their love of literature. They have cherished their sagas and Eddas for a thousand years and their modern poetry and prose, especially their poetry, contain much high ranking literature.

The Icelandic people in America have displayed this love of literature. Over the period of years they have maintained a voluminous output of poetry and prose, including journalistic writing. Outstanding is the poetry of Stephan G. Stephansson, noted for his originality, power, variety, and metrical skill. Watson Kirkconnell has classed him as the premier poet in the British Dominions, in his time.

In the early years of settlement, the years of thrusting roots in a new world, literary work was done under adverse circumstances. There was strenuous work for settlers on the land and for laborers on the railroad and in the city, where employment featured prominently sawing wood, loading cargo, and digging sewers. There was also the challenge of learning a new language and adaptation to new ways of life. Many of these early writers were self-educated, although it is to be noted that some of them were familiar with the masters in English and Scandinavian literature in the original. To mention but two instances of work done under such adverse circumstances, there was Jon Runolfsson, who commenced the writing of his

exquisite lyric poetry while engaged in common labor in the city, in the very early 'eighties, and Torfhildur Holm, in the same period, working long hours sewing, and writing her 700 page novel *Elding* and other works on scraps of paper. The publications *Framfari* (Progress) 1877-80 and *Leifur*, 1883-86, were in themselves creative efforts and *Leifur* in its three years of publication carried some forty poems.

The pioneer poets had something to say that demanded expression and they were original. Prominent themes were nostalgic memories of the homeland which they had left for a better life in the new world, experiences of pioneering life, love of freedom, and nature. Kristinn Stefansson (1856-1916) wrote many poems on such themes, including lyrics inspired by Canadian nature, and he wrote early about the weaving of the Canadian national pattern.

These early writers and their successors, including Fridrik J. Bergmann Guttormur J. Guttormsson, Sig. Jul. Johannesson, Jakobina Johnson, Einar Pall Jonsson, and Th. Th. Thorsteinson have expressed themselves in the Icelandic language. Writers of another generation including Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Baldur Jonsson, Laura Goodman Salverson, Kristine Benson Kristoferson, have expressed themselves in the English language, their natural medium of speech. Their range of theme reflects their Icelandic origin.

as well as their Canadian birth and upbringing. Their work ranks high.

In addition to the original writing mentioned, another type of literary work has been done over a period of many years, commencing with the turn of the century. This is translation from Icelandic to English. Prominent in this field have been Jakobina Johnson, Skuli Johnson, and Paul Bjarnason, among those of Icelandic origin, and William Morris, Sir William Craigie, Watson Kirkconnell, Lee M. Hollander, and G. A. Hight, of other than Icelandic origin. There are many others. Their field has been poetry and prose, ancient and modern.

One would expect that in this field of translation those with an Icelandic background and with comparable command of both English and Icelandic would be doing the major part of this work, but such is not the case. Indeed, the reverse is true. This brings strongly home to us of Icelandic origin that we should be doing more to translate from the literature which our forebears have cherished and which we

cherish. This theme has been developed in the last two issues of the *Icelandic Canadian*.

It would be presumption to urge to greater activity those who do original, creative work, but it is in order to point out to those who still are bilingual that the sands of time are running out. It is important that those who are able to translate do so now.

One more thought in conclusion. We have several instances where scholars of non-Icelandic stock have mastered the Icelandic language without benefit of special instruction. Have we in the third or fourth generation of the Icelandic people in Canada and the United States those who with or without benefit of university instruction have the desire and the will to do as well? This is the challenge. What is the response?

Confronted with the challenge to continue literary achievement we derive inspiration from those who gave us the sagas and the Eddas and others of more recent times who have contributed to our literary heritage.

The Cold of the North

By BONNIE JOHNSON

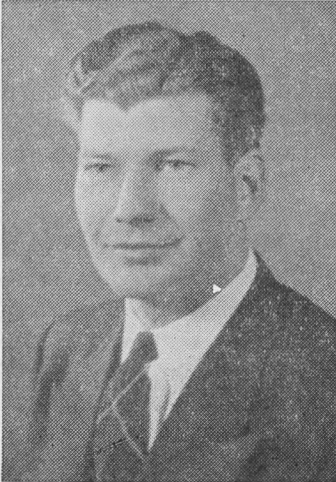
The cold was stinging, biting, cutting; a sharp, sunlit, windless cold that penetrated to the very marrow. The snow was crisp, the air was crisp and even our voices when we spoke were made crisp. The sun shone with fierce brilliance, making the snow unbearably white. The air we breathed seemed to stiffen the lungs, coming out in steamy vapour that made icicles on our chins and the fur of our hoods. Through the white frost of our eyelashes we looked at the gleaming white expanse that lay ahead. But it was too cold to speak. Such is the "coldest" cold. It is the cold of the north.

Ed. Note: The above was written by Bonnie Johnson of Vogar, Manitoba, temporarily at Hay River, N.W.T.

THE THIRD GENERATION

by W. MERWYN JOHNSON, M.P.

Address delivered at the annual concert of The Icelandic Canadian Club in the First Lutheran Church, Winnipeg, held on Tuesday February 21, 1956. Mr. Johnson is the Member of Parliament for Kindersley constituency in Saskatchewan.



W. Merwyn Johnson, M.P.

What makes an Icelander proud of the fact that he is an Icelander? How aware is an Icelander of his responsibilities to his fellow man? These are two of the questions that I am going to discuss with you this evening in the hope that by doing so our objectives will be clarified so that we can rededicate ourselves to continued progress in the field of culture and the humanities. I am very grateful to Judge Lindal for the kind invitation to share this evening with you and I have been looking forward to the occasion. This is particularly true because of the hospitality which has always been shown me as I have visited Icelandic homes in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. One is always invited in to share a cup of coffee and the excellent cooking that goes with it. Upon receiving

the invitation I wondered why I should be honoured to be with you this night and follow the distinguished footsteps of those who have preceded me in this pleasurable task. It was explained to me that we must be aware of our responsibilities to the Canadian society in which we have been transplanted, directly or indirectly.

As we attempt to understand the integrating process of the varying ethnic groups in Canada it is important to know what qualities are retained and which are lost. Only by a study of the thinking of Canadian born second and third generations can we gain an insight into this process.

I am a third generation Icelander and can claim to have purity of blood. You see, my father bypassed the step followed by so many of our ancestors of travelling from Ireland to Iceland and then centuries later of coming to Canada.

The Irish were so prominent in the original settlement of Iceland that the authorities claim that the modern Icelander is from ten to fifty per cent Irish.

My father came to Canada from Ireland when he was ten years old. I would wager if his family tree were traced it would show that his ancestors travelled from Norway to Normandy and thence to Ireland. He is blue-eyed and angular which is so characteristic of the Norse and, with the judgement that lineage provides, later married one of the gems of womanhood who

parents had emigrated from Iceland. My mother's parents came from Iceland in 1886 to settle in the Portage La Prairie district in Manitoba, later moving to the Holar community (now Tantallon) and eventually to Merid, in western Saskatchewan. They were of the group that pioneered this country and to which our Jubilee celebrations in Saskatchewan paid such sincere tribute.

Lest the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration be disturbed, I can assure him that I am a Canadian baby, and that my first outlook is as that of a Canadian. My ancestry has added perspective and I am going to attempt to analyze my responsibilities as an Icelandic Canadian and see what qualifications can be directly related to my lineage. I am doing this because I feel there is an added responsibility in the hearts of those in my generation—these responsibilities must be recognized and accepted by us lest we forget them and fail in the golden opportunity to grow and build, as we have in the past.

I should go back nearly twenty years to outline one of the fundamental qualifications that persons of our race possess and the impact it has had on my life. This same impact has brought respect to our race because of the emphasis placed upon it by Icelanders. The pattern which I followed has been duplicated many times since and I know it will be repeated in the future. At the time I finished my grade school, Canadians were struggling to emerge from the greatest depression the west has known. The town of Kindersley was called the heart of the drought belt—continuously lashed with dusty winds and heat. The challenge was that of getting enough for the bare necessities of

life—enough to feed and clothe your family. The fruits of your labor would shrink before your very eyes. With these conditions, what then was the prospect of going to a high school to complete my education? I do not need to tell you—because you already know! You have lived through and experienced the same thing yourself. One of the qualities which we possess—a quality which has won for us the respect and admiration of our fellow man, is the intense desire for education. This desire for education is not aimed at achieving supremacy over our fellow man—indeed the opposite is true—it is aimed at achieving a better understanding of our fellow man.

This thirst for knowledge and literature—to be created and preserved, is almost as old as the Icelandic nation itself. This qualification is so pronounced that Professor Huntington of Yale, a historian of human cultures, has stated that Iceland, through its literature, has contributed more to human progress, in proportion to its population, than any other region except ancient Greece and Palestine. It is with pride that we can look upon the continuation of our literary development and its recognition by the winning of the Nobel prize for literature by Halldor Kiljan Laxness.

Those of you who came to Canada as pioneers or as children of pioneers will recall the one carefully guarded treasure which was carried to this foreign land was a library of books. Books which were studied and read, on cold winter nights, by the light of a candle so that by studying the sagas and histories of the past you might better understand your fellow man of today. With this background, it is simple to understand why I, and many

others in like circumstances, were privileged to finish our high school and with the sacrifice of parental determination, pursue this knowledge at the university level.

The very close bond which we of the Icelandic race have with our parents is one important factor in our success. We, who were privileged to continue our education, could only attempt to show our gratitude to our parents by devotion to our studies. There were times, I suspect, when we would get a bit lazy and our marks would sag but because of our love of our parents and our urge to be a credit to them our efforts would quickly be redoubled. All walks of life are studded with those of Icelandic origin who through this same urge have made great contributions to the general understanding of their fellow man. Vilhjalmur Stefansson would certainly be an example of one who, personally and through his writings, has done much to bring about an understanding of ourselves and others. Judge Lindal is one who has strived for this understanding and I am sure that we all appreciate his contribution in writing the book, "The Saskatchewan Icelanders, A Strand of the Canadian Fabric", which has been so well received.

There is one thing we must not forget when we look with pride upon the achievements which have been gained in this our land, whether adopted or native. Most of those who left the rocky shores of Iceland were far from wealthy. Many had but the clothes they wore on their backs, a few possessions and a library of books. We find that no matter how poor the immigrant may have been no matter what hardship he had experienced, he had a profound respect for the dignity of

man. One hundred years ago—in 1856—Lord Dufferin, later Governor General of Canada, when making a visit to Iceland to interest them in coming to Canada, wrote: "The Icelanders are . . . by all accounts, the most devout, innocent, pure-hearted people in the world. Crime, theft, debauchery, cruelty, are unknown among them; they have neither prison, gallows, soldiers, nor police; and in the manner of the lives they lead . . . there is something of a patriarchal simplicity . . ." Icelanders know from first-hand experience how important to the freedom and dignity of man is the maintenance of a social system which gives everyone an even chance to develop as a person.

When the pioneers came to this new land they were looked down upon because of the poverty which had been forced upon those who had come. We have heard the term Goolies used to cast reflections on those who had a greater appreciation of the dignity of man than the persons using the term. Many of the Icelanders had difficulty in securing employment. However, this discrimination did not embitter them and it was not long before the quality of our background brought recognition and distinction to them. I think we could safely say that those who were privileged to come to this new land were given a great opportunity.

Returning now to my second question of how well we measure up to our responsibilities. Most of us are growing fat compared to our fellow man in other parts of the world. Are we to forget one of the qualities that allowed us to rise in the Canadian culture? Are we to forget the deep and abiding moral values of our cultural heritage because of our well being? I think we must constantly re-

mind ourselves that our very success as Canadians may destroy us as members of the world community. We have a duty as Icelandic Canadians to remember that man, be he yellow, black or white, has a striving for the same dignity and freedom. It is our duty because we have learned this lesson from experience and we must do what we can to help others to this understanding of the brotherhood of man. We must recognize that others in foreign lands cannot come to Canada, as we have done, so we must be at all times offering a helping hand, each in his own small way, to achieve for others what we have desired for ourselves. We cannot be happy knowing that millions of our brothers are physically and mentally starving. We cannot be content to ignore our responsibility to achieve a democratic way of life for others. Because of our own recent history we are in a position to help Canadians generally to a better understanding of this overwhelming problem. We must set ourselves about this task with haste and without a moment to lose. And this does not apply only to foreign lands, for there are many injustices and inequalities on our very doorstep that we must correct. It is indeed a challenge, but we have faith in ourselves.

As Judge Lindal indicated, I have the honor of being one of your representatives in the Parliament of Canada. It is true that Mr. Benedickson and I are the only two of Icelandic descent in the federal parliament, but as we look to provincial and municipal legislative bodies we find representation far in excess of our ethnic proportions. It is not difficult to find an explanation for this, for if we look to the past we find that Iceland has been dedicated to a democratic form of

government perhaps longer than any other nation. Icelanders have continued this tradition and we are deeply imbued with the freedom and dignity of man which finds expression in the democratic way.

In the western provinces we find many examples. In becoming Premier of British Columbia, Byron Johnson indicated the striving for improvement to mankind through public service. Asmundur Loptson is presently serving in the Saskatchewan legislature. We must recognize the distinguished record of the Honorable Justice Joseph Thorson, whose service to all Canada makes us proud of the fact that we too are Icelanders. The 1951 census lists over twenty-three thousand of Icelandic descent in Canada and in proportion to these numbers we can be proud of the record of achievement.

I have attempted to answer two questions which we have asked ourselves many times. Why are we proud to be Icelanders and how aware are we, as Icelanders, of our responsibilities to our fellow man? We of the third generation must apply these answers to ourselves and we can only conclude that our appreciation of the brotherhood of man and democratic principles are directly related to the teachings we have received from our parents. As one of the third generation who has not the common bond of language—I do not read or speak Icelandic—the task will be more difficult. We will be denied a ready access to the appreciation of our inheritance through the sagas and histories of our native land. But it will be because of our inheritance and our desire to appreciate our fellow man that we are recognized and respected.

I will conclude by saying that there is another quality which we seem to

possess—a quality which I have felt many times and cannot attempt to explain. No matter where I travel I have noticed a common bond between those of Icelandic descent and myself. As I attended the university I noticed a feeling of friendship with those of my same background. I had the warmest feeling toward the Kristjansons from Wynyard, and the Olafsons from Eston, the Helgasons from D'Arcy, the Stephansons from Elfros. As I served in Her Majesty's forces I noted that same bond with the many of my blood whom I met as we performed our duty. I must confess that that same feeling exists between Mr. Benedickson and myself, even though we are political opponents. The most recent example would be the privilege I had of meeting Mr. Björn Björnsson and Mr. Guðmundur Guðmundsson, members of the Icelandic delegation to the NATO Parliament-

ary Conference which met in Paris in July of last year. We were each on foreign soil and yet of the delegates I was privileged to meet, it seemed that in their case I was renewing acquaintances. I note the same feeling in being with you on this occasion. It seems to me that this feeling could be a dangerous thing. Dangerous if it sets us apart, dangerous if it prevents us from being integrated into our new cultures, and confines us unto ourselves. I believe that the common bond comes from our background—our background of the appreciation of the freedom and dignity of man. The process which you are going through at this festival—the process of understanding and appreciating our own culture, does not set us apart—indeed it is this process of understanding and appreciating our culture which brings us together.

Farming North of 55

Experiments in farming in the northern areas of Canada are being conducted by the federal Department of Agriculture. Among the projects is an experimental station at Wabowden on the Hudson Bay Railway, 137 miles northeast of The Pas, in what is known as the clay belt left by the glacial Lake Agassiz. In charge of this station is Wally Bjarnason, a graduate of the University of Manitoba and the University of Texas. His background of

Texas scientific farming and Manitoba accountancy brought him this assignment which is to be carried on initially for a five-year period. He is assisted by his wife, the former Pat Dickson, a school teacher at Wabowden prior to their marriage a few years ago. They have two young children. Grown at the station are garden and grain crops normally grown on the Canadian prairies.

Skálholt—1056-1956

by REV. ERIC H. SIGMAR

On a beautiful spring day in April 1954, my wife and I were walking down an old cobble-stoned street in the ancient little university city of Lund in Southern Sweden. We passed by a book store that dealt in old books as well as contemporary ones. As I looked in the window, something caught my attention: centrally displayed were three ancient hand-drawn maps on good parchment, yellow with age but all intact and in good condition. The one in the centre was a map of Iceland, hand-drawn, dating from the year 1584! I was fascinated with it; first because of its age, and secondly because it was nearly accurate even though it was a map of that vintage. But mostly it was fascinating because there were two things that stood out on the map which made me pause and study it for some time. It was the unusual prominence that was given to two places: "Skálholt" in the south, and "Hólar" in the north. Both places occupied considerable space on the map, with their names in large letters, and each place was indicated by a drawing of a large cathedral.

Had I seen this map before I went to Iceland, I would have been confused and surprised. In my childhood, when Iceland was mentioned there were two places usually spoken about: Reykjavík, the capital, and Reykjadal from where my parental grandparents came. But now—, I had been to Iceland, and I knew and appreciated the tremendous historical significance of these two hallowed places. They

were more than just names to me now. I had enjoyed the privilege of visiting both these former centers of religion and culture. There was Hólar, about forty miles west of Akureyri, which still retains a great deal of its grandeur and atmosphere of its storied past, because of its remarkable almost 200 year old Cathedral. For buildings of antiquity are of necessity few and far between in Iceland, but once in the Hólar Church you are given a feeling of standing in the past. Much older than the cathedral church are the many stone slabs over the graves of bishops who ruled the diocese of Hólar in the distant past.

And Skálholt, too, we visited, about fifty-five miles east of Reykjavík, on our way to Gullfoss, the majestic waterfall. I'll never forget how bitterly disappointed I was when I saw Skálholt, the first and ancient Bishop's See of Iceland. In great contrast to Hólar, there was nothing at Skálholt to indicate its historical importance, except a little square neglected chapel, where the former cathedral churches of Skálholt had stood. But its location was on a raised plateau, overlooking a beautiful valley below.

But back to the map! I went in to the bookstore, and asked to have a close-up view of that map of Iceland. I wanted that map, but when I was informed that it was selling for 150 Swedish-kroner, I had no choice. By then Svava and I were trying to eat for 5 kroner a day. But I have never forgiven myself for not arranging somehow to procure that map.

Many of my listeners tonight know that Iceland's history through the centuries has been closely associated with the story of these two "Bishop's Sees" or church headquarters, Skálholt and Hólar. They were right from their beginnings, 1056 and 1106 respectively, the nation's centers of not only religious life, but of its cultural political, and social life as well. In the early centuries in Iceland there were no cities, no fishing villages, as today. There were only scattered farms of which many were located near the sea. But these two places were the throbbing centers of its cultural life. Here gathered through the centuries, in both Catholic and Lutheran periods, not only the great church-men of the day, but other scholars and literary men. Here at both Hólar and Skálholt were fine schools, where men from all parts of the country studied the classical learning of the day. Here, later, were the only two printing presses in the country.

But now, this year, 1956, SKÁLHOLT stands out in a special way. This very year is the 900th year since the establishment of Skálholt! We here in Canada speak of antiquity in terms of 100 years ago; so it is difficult, almost impossible, to conceive of the history of this hallowed place dating back to 900 years ago! I think that this historical event should truly capture the imagination of the people of the Icelandic Canadian Club. This Club has as one of its avowed purposes the transmission of knowledge of the culture, literature and history of Iceland in the language of our Icelandic Canadians. Here is truly such a subject, and one that spans the years of Iceland's history almost to its beginnings. I wish therefore tonight to focus our attention, and interest, on

the significance of Skálholt. That interest should be heightened on this aged anniversary year.

About a year ago you published in your magazine an article written by Prof. Sigurbjörn Einarsson of the Theological Faculty of the University of Iceland, and translated by Judge Walter Lindal. There the historical significance of Skálholt, and the plans to restore it in part to its original purpose, were interestingly presented. Professor Einarsson became one of my closest friends while I was in Iceland, and some of his enthusiasm for Skálholt's history and possible restoration was passed on to me.

The story of Skálholt, in brief, is this: Christianity was established as the official religion in Iceland by parliamentary decree at Althing's gathering at Thingvellir in the year 1000. But the Church as such was very weak. There were few Christians by conviction, and only a handful of priests, and among them no particular leaders, and of course then, at the beginning no bishop or head of the Church. The leading promoters of Christianity were the "Chiefs" or "goðar". Some of them erected churches on their farms and secured priests. One of these "goðar" or "Chiefs" was Gissur the White in Skálholt. He sent his son Ísleifur to Germany to study. When Ísleifur returned he had been theologically trained and ordained, and now at Skálholt he established a school and served the church there. Here many men came to study; many who were subsequently leaders in the literary and religious life of the nation. The people began to feel the need of a leader, a bishop. Ísleifur was the one selected. Nine hundred years ago this summer he went to Bremen, Germany, to be consecrated first

Bishop of Iceland. He was consecrated by the Archbishop of the North, whose See was in Bremen. In 1954, on my birthday June 12, I stood on the very spot where Ísleifur was consecrated first bishop of Iceland in Bremen, in the Bremen Cathedral dating back to 1490, and that was where the Cathedral of the 11th century had stood.

Thus a center for the religious and cultural life of Iceland was established; and later Skálholt's bishop arranged for the establishment of another diocesan center at Hólar, in the north.

Doubtless the greatest leader of Skálholt was Bishop Gissur, son of Ísleifur the first bishop. Gissur was a powerful man of thought, and learning, and action. He was a tremendous leader and encouraged scholars to study at the school at Skálholt. It was Gissur who gave permanence and meaning to Skálholt, when he formally gave his patrimony to the Cathedral Sec. . . "as long as Christianity endures in Iceland . . ." There were other great leaders too during the long Catholic period. And it was here at Skálholt that the Reformation movement began in Iceland. During the reign of Bishop Ögmundur Pálsson, last Catholic Bishop of Skálholt, two brilliant young men had been studying in Europe and were influenced by the Reformation of Martin Luther. One was Gissur Einarsson, who became the first Lutheran Bishop of Iceland in 1540, and the other was Oddur Gottskálksson, who translated the New Testament into Icelandic at Skálholt. It was later printed in Denmark.

There were other great leaders at Skálholt through the years, but too numerous to mention except a few briefly. Bishop Thordur Thorlaksson, who died in the late 17th century, published, on Skálholt's printing presses,

the literature of the "Golden Age", i.e. the "Saga Age" of literature, the fabulous literary production of the 12th and 13th centuries. Bishop Jón Vídalín, successor of Thorlaksson, will forever be remembered as the beloved and powerful preacher, whose sermons were read by our grandparents here in the new country from books they brought with them from back home. Some consider him to be the greatest bishop of Skálholt, next to Gissur Ísleifson. Later there was the learned scholar, Finnur Jónsson, who wrote the famous "Biskupa-sögur", or Church History of Iceland from the beginning to his day in the mid-eighteenth century.

Hannes Finnson was the last bishop of Skálholt. He died there in 1796. After his death, Iceland's two Sees were united in Reykjavík, and Bishop Geir Jónsson Vídalín of Skálholt moved to Reykjavík, and became Bishop of all Iceland.

In time Skálholt fell into ruins. Later even the parish pastor moved his residence to Torfastaðir, and Skálholt became just an "annex" of the parish! In the last century many leading men of Iceland have lamented the fate of Skálholt. For years poverty prevented any concrete means of restoring some of the historical significance of Skálholt by building a new church and a proper shrine there. But now the time has come. The approach of the 900th anniversary of Skálholt's establishment stirred some men to action, and a "Skálholt Society" was formed with Prof. Sigurbjörn Einarsson as president. He has worked tirelessly on this project, with articles and speeches to stir up interest in building up Skálholt. The efforts of the Society resulted in having a Government Committee organized by Althing, which has

worked with the Skálholt Society in investigating the best means of restoring Skálholt. Money is being advanced by the government, and private subscriptions are solicited all over the country.

The plans call for re-building a cathedral church, in style the same as the last one that stood at Skálholt; a post-graduate school for Theological students to come to for practical and inspirational training after the university course in theology; the presence there of the "vígslu-biskup" or "vice-bishop" who would act as head of the school etc.; the parish pastor's residence to be moved again to Skálholt. These plans will be given concrete reality this summer (sometime in July) when impressive ceremonies will take place at Skálholt. The corner-stone for the future "Cathedral" Church will be laid by the Bishop of Iceland, with visiting dignitaries from every Scandinavian country, and other countries, present. It is planned that this great event will be celebrated at the same time as the Pastoral Association of

Scandinavia meets in Iceland. It is to be hoped that a representative from among our Canadians and Americans of Icelandic stock can be present on this great occasion.

The Skálholt Society fervently feels that a concrete permanence to the memories which envelop this sacred place has now been started. It is their earnest hope that what happens this summer at this place will be just the beginning of a "new day" for ancient Skálholt. Even as Thingvellir is the most memorable place in Iceland's national life, so is Skálholt the most sacred sanctuary in the history of Christianity in Iceland. May we Canadians of Icelandic descent join with our brethren over there in the hope that a new day will now dawn for this sacred place so that it may take its rightful place in the spiritual and cultural life of the nation.

Ed. Note — The above is the main part of an address delivered by Rev. Eric H. Sigmar, St. James, Man., at the annual Banquet and Dance of The Icelandic Canadian Club, held on January 27, at the Marlborough Hotel.

Seventy-fifth Anniversary

of Founding of Gardar Lutheran Congregation

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Icelandic Lutheran congregation at Gardar, North Dakota, was celebrated there on Sunday, Dec. 4, last. The observance took the form of divine service in the Gardar Lutheran Church, conducted by Rev. Olafur Skulason. Music was provided by a 25-voice choir under the direction of Theo. Thorleifsson, Mrs. William Olgeirson of Mountain, was organist and Mrs. M. Goodman soloist. Two

dozen hymnals were dedicated as a memorial to the late M. S. Gudmundson, long and active worker in the church. It was recalled that on Nov. 24, 1880, Rev. Pall Thorlaksson, then of Mountain, went to Gardar to conduct the organization meeting. It thus became the first Icelandic Lutheran congregation in North Dakota. The Mountain congregation was organized six days later.

Iceland's Golden Age Literature

A brief Survey of How it Was First Introduced to the World

by HJALMUR F. DANIELSON

Part I

Today it is an accepted fact that the Old Icelandic literature is recognized by leading scholars the world over, as a unique treasure in the field of literature. It is, therefore, of interest to go back to the events and incidents which served to launch, we might say, the Icelandic Golden Age Classics upon a world-wide sphere.

Although the Old Icelandic literature has been of great importance to European nations they had practically no knowledge of it before the turn of the seventeenth century. It was through the persistent efforts of one man, Arngrím Jonsson, the Learned, that this literature was first introduced to the world. It was through his efforts that knowledge of it was brought to the attention of scholars in various countries of Northern Europe, which resulted in the creation of the science of Northern Antiquities. It was through his work in this field that Arngrím became the most notable scholar in Iceland during his time and was accorded a high place among scholars in Europe.

During the first three centuries after the settlement of Iceland, which commenced in 874, all literary and historical material had to be preserved orally; that is, by word of mouth, committed to memory and passed on from generation to generation. In this manner the material, later recorded as the Sagas of the Icelanders, the Eddas, and the old scaldic poems, came down to

"In books lies the soul of the whole past time,
The articulate, audible voice of the past."

—Thomas Carlyle



Reverend Arngrímur Jónsson
at the age of 24.

succeeding generations; in this manner also the history of the Northern European countries was preserved, as well as the vast and intricate collection of laws, including the code of laws of the Republic itself which was handed down in the notable volume called "Grágás."

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries all this material was gradually recorded in writing in a large number of vellum manuscript books. These books were made of well tanned calf- or sheepskins and were substantially bound. Later they were copied and re-copied in the homes of the common

people of Iceland as well as in the monasteries. Thus instead of becoming the exclusive property of the favored few they became the treasure of the people as a whole, high and low, rich and poor. These books were read and re-read through the centuries and it was due to the constant reading of this ancient literature, as well as the isolation of Iceland, that the Old Norse language, which during ancient time had been the common language of Northern Europe, was preserved only in Iceland, and has been handed down as a living language, while Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and many other languages, in which literature has been recorded, have become dead languages.

Arngrim was a descendant of prominent families in Iceland, and several of his descendants, in turn, became renowned men. Two of his grandsons, the cousins, Bishop Jón Vídalín (1666-1720), reputed to have been the most eloquent of ecclesiastics in Iceland, and Páll Vídalín, a lawyer, were famous men of Iceland in their day.

Arngrim was born on a farm in northern Iceland in 1568. At the age of eight years he lost his father, who perished in a snow storm in the mountains while trying to save his flock of sheep. Arngrim then became the foster-son of his cousin, Bishop Guðbrandur Thorlaksson of Hólar Bishopric. He attended the school at Hólar for eight years and then completed his formal studies in four years at the University of Copenhagen, in Denmark.

On his return to Iceland Arngrim was appointed Rector of the school at Hólar, a position which he held for six years. Owing to Bishop Thorlaksson's failing health, Arngrim became his assistant in 1596, and continued until the Bishop passed away in 1625. Arngrim was then nominated for

Bishop, an honor which he declined, possibly for the reason that he had become much occupied with research as well as the writing of books. He was also serving a parish and was an archdeacon. The new Bishop, Thorlakur Skulason, a grandson of the late Bishop Thorlaksson, was not ordained until in 1628, and during the intervening three years Arngrim was acting Bishop.

Arngrim Jonsson was gifted with outstanding mental and physical qualities which set him apart as a leader in the world of thought and scholastic achievement. Not only was he an excellent scholar, but he was a handsome man, of prepossessing appearance and charming manners. He was furthermore an effective and logically sound conversationalist. Thus it was that he made several lasting friendships in Denmark, among students who later became renowned in literary circles.

As already mentioned, before the seventeenth century, the people of Europe possessed only a very limited knowledge about Iceland and its people. However, several foreign writers did not let that fact deter them from writing about the country. These men wrote and published books about Iceland which exposed their own gross ignorance of Iceland in regard to the country itself, the people and conditions in general. When these distorted facts and deliberate falsehoods came to the attention of the Icelanders, their ire and indignation were naturally aroused. They felt that some effort had to be made to refute this mass of erroneous statements about their country and their culture, and the man they chose to undertake this task was the Reverend Arngrim Jonsson, who was acknowledged to be the

most learned man in Iceland at that time.

Arngrim approached the problem honestly and vigorously, and during the next few years wrote and published several books expressly for the purpose of contradicting these erroneous statements. In order to reach scholars throughout the world he wrote these books in Latin as was the custom in those days.

Although there was a printing press at Hólar at the time¹, and eighty five books were published there before the end of the seventeenth century, Arngrim had to send his manuscripts abroad for publication, as the Hólar press was in the service of the Church and was used exclusively for printing religious literature.

In his first series of books Arngrim corrected the misstatements published in foreign lands by careless and unscrupulous writers, and gave a wealth of authentic information about Iceland. This series consisted of three books: **Brevis Commentarius**, published in Denmark in 1593; **Anatone Blef-kentana**, published in Lynden, Germany, in 1607; and **Epistala Propotria Defensaria**, published in Hamburg, Germany, in 1618.

Rebuttal was a slow process in those early days when ships came to Iceland only in the spring and in the fall of each year. Frequently Arngrim was forced to wait a long time until a publisher found it convenient to print his books, and sometimes his manuscripts went astray and were lost for long periods of time. But eventually Arngrim's books came to the attention of scholars in many lands who im-

mediately could see the historical and literary value of what Arngrim had been able to include of Old Icelandic Classical literature in his first volumes, even though in fragmentary form. It was a revelation to these scholars to find that a handful of people struggling for a meagre existence on a volcanic island on the fringe of the arctic zone, should, during many centuries, have been able to preserve their language and record a literature of a profound nature, which would prove not only valuable to themselves, but to all peoples of Northern Europe as well. Gradually requests began to come to Arngrim from these scholars, for further information about the Old Icelandic literature. Arngrim rose to the challenge, and wrote his **Crymogæa**, in three volumes, which was published in Hamburg, Germany, in 1609. Volume I. gave detailed information about Iceland, the story of the settlement of the island, which began in 874, by Norwegians and Irish; an account of Icelandic law and trial by jury. Volume II. depicted the background of the high-born chieftains who were the leaders of settlement, and contained biographies of some of the early settlers. It also contained fragments of some of the Sagas of Icelanders. Volume III. included more recent history of Iceland and other related matters. In 1625 seven chapters of the **Crymogæa** were translated into English and published in London, England.

Arngrim also wrote a book about Greenland in Latin. It contained the story of the settlement of Greenland in 986, which was organized by Eric the Red, the father of Leif Eiriksson, the discoverer of America in the year 1000. This book did not come before the public until it was translated into Icelandic and published in Iceland in

¹ Bishop Jón Arason, the last Catholic Bishop in Iceland, who was consecrated as Bishop of Hólar in 1524, established a printing press in 1530.

1688, under the title: *Grænlands Saga*. The Icelandic historian, Thormod Torfæus (Thormóður Torfason), 1636-1719, included this work in his book about Greenland, called, *Gronlandia*, which was also written in Latin.

It is quite evident that through these efforts of Arngrim Jonsson, scholars in Europe were beginning to realize for the first time that a great deal of information about the history of Northern European peoples, their ancient religion, customs and code of laws was available in Iceland.

Arngrim went to Copenhagen in the fall of 1592 on business for the Bishop of Hólar. He spent the winter there and renewed acquaintance with several scholars. These scholars eagerly sought information about the Icelandic Classics, which he willingly supplied in generous measure. In the spring of 1593 he returned to Iceland.

In the following year the King of Denmark, Christian IV (1588-1648), appointed Prof. Niels Krag to write a history of Denmark. Krag took over some material which had been collected by Andres S. Vedel, most of which had been supplied by Arngrim. Krag, however, discovered that most of the authentic material required for the compiling of the early history of Denmark, was available only in Iceland, where it had been recorded and preserved.¹ He wrote to Arngrim requesting his assistance in collecting

and translating into Danish, old historical manuscripts dealing with Danish history. Arngrim, in his reply, stated that the people in Iceland were very reluctant to part with their cherished books and manuscripts as these were highly treasured and in constant use in their homes all through the country.

As Arngrim would have access to these precious books and manuscripts the Danish King appointed him, on April 17th, 1596, Assistant Historian for Denmark, the Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands. He would be stationed in Iceland. The King issued an order to the people of Iceland that they should assist Arngrim by lending him old manuscripts and books dealing with Danish history.

It appears that Arngrim had by this time redoubled his efforts at research and writing as that same fall he accomplished the remarkable feat of collecting material for a history of the Orkney Islands, and a history of Sweden, revising the material and completing the work, each in a small separate volume. In 1597 he completed the history of Denmark and the history of Norway—two large volumes. He forwarded these books, all written in Latin, to Krag, who was the King's historian at the time, and gave as references twenty six vellum manuscript books (e.g. bound volumes) which were available at Hólar Bishopric, as well as numerous volumes of

1 The renowned Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus, (1140-1206), wrote a history of Denmark, in Latin, (*Historica Danica*), in sixteen manuscript volumes, covering the period down to 1186. The *Encyclopedia Americana* states as follows: "... the earlier of which give a highly colored and imaginative account of ancient Danish history. The first nine can scarcely be looked up on as reliable history." Arngrim based his history on Denmark entirely on Icelandic sources such as: *Knytlinga Saga*, *Skjöldunga Saga*, *Sagas of the*

Kings of Norway (*Heimskringla*), individual *Sagas of Kings*, and fragments from several of the *Sagas of Icelanders*. Saxo's manuscript books were lost for three hundred years, and with great difficulty a copy was secured in 1500 at which time it was published. Saxo's first nine volumes were published in English in two large volumes in 1907, and were included in a set of fifteen volumes published by The Norroena Society and called: "*Norroena, Anglo-Saxon Classics*. Nine volumes of this set were translated from the Icelandic.

manuscripts which he was able to borrow from individuals, and later return.

Professor Krag was not in Copenhagen when the books arrived. They were placed in the University library but were all destroyed in the great fire in Copenhagen in 1728. Fortunately scholars who had access to Arngrim's original manuscripts had copied all the books, and the copies were preserved.

From this time on Arngrim plunged ever more deeply into his work of translating and writing books. Among these later books were: *Jómsvíkinga Saga*, *Hauksbók*, a *Latin Grammar*, and *Specimen Islandiæ Historicum*, the last named a book of 174 pages, was published in Amsterdam, in Holland in 1643.

Professor Oluf Worm, an eminent scholar and writer, followed Professor Krag (and his successor, Jon Venesinus) as King's historian. Arngrim ably assisted all these men. A close friendship sprang up between Arngrim and Oluf Worm which lasted until Arngrim's death. Their voluminous correspondence which began in 1628 bears witness to the mutual esteem that these two fine scholars entertained for each other. Oluf Worm was among those European scholars who had a tremendous admiration for the outstanding scholarship, energy and ability of Arngrim Jonsson, and he frequently sought his advice in connection with his own writings, and forwarded his own manuscripts to him for correction and suggestions. At one time he sent to Arngrim a manuscript he was preparing on Runic characters, and asked for his suggestions regarding the work.

Arngrim did not write for material gain. Indeed in addition to devoting his time and energy whole heartedly to this important task, he spent large

sums of money in connection with the publishing of his books. In recognition of his outstanding work in aiding Danish historians, the King granted him the rent from seven church farms in the Hólar Diocese, which had up to that time been part of the revenue of Bishop Thorlakur Skulason. Arngrim found it necessary to engage an assistant parson to help with the parish work while he himself was occupied in research and writing, which he carried on until his death in 1648, at the age of eighty years. In a letter written by Bishop Thorlakur Skulason to Professor Oluf Worm, September 10th, 1648, he announced the death of Reverend Arngrim Jonsson and called him "The light of Iceland". In his turn, Oluf Worm felt that Iceland had lost another Snorri Sturluson, and he doubted if Iceland would ever again see his equal.

It is difficult for people in these modern times to realize the superhuman amount of work accomplished by Arngrim Jonsson, this indefatigable and unselfish man of letters, whose noblest aim and exalted purpose was to bring before the world the best that his country had to offer in the way of culture and character. That he accomplished this and much more is almost a miracle when one considers the crude and meagre facilities at hand. This work was done in addition to filling the demanding position of a parson and archdeacon, as well as serving for six years as Rector of the school at Hólar, and being assistant to the Bishop for twenty eight years, and for three years acting Bishop.

One can imagine him sitting at his desk hour after hour, rejoicing in the long summer day of northern Iceland, when the kindly sun merely dips into the ocean to emerge again to give the

glorious promise of a long new day. One can see him also in the gloom of a winter's dreary day, when only a few precious hours of daylight are afforded for his demanding task. One can imagine him, oblivious to day or night, as he bends closely to his work to decipher the faded writing on the vellum manuscripts, by the faint light of a train oil lamp (grútarljós). He commenced his work on a small scale; it expanded and grew until he had become the centre of a group of enthusiastic and able scholars, who were determined to learn more and more about the Old Classical literature. These men became more or less his disciples; they worked with him and carried on his work after his day.

Arngrim Jonsson may well be called the father of Northern Antiquities. He and his small group of co-workers were the forerunners of the eminent world scholars who now concern themselves

with the value of the Old Icelandic Classical literature on an ever and ever wider scale, with the result that a part of this noble literature has already been translated into no less than thirteen languages. His monument is not cast in bronze or cut in marble but a debt of gratitude is due to him; due to him as a leader who took the initial steps to acquaint the world with the literary treasures of Iceland, which had been recorded during a period when there was literary gloom in the rest of Europe.

"Iceland shone with glorious lore renowned,
A Northern Light when all was gloom around."

—Montgomery

NOTE: Part II of this article, which will appear in the Summer Issue, will give a glimpse of some of the scholars of non-Icelandic descent, who have delved into the literary heritage of Iceland, have found it to contain treasures valuable to the whole world of literature, and have set themselves the task of bringing it, through translations and comments, into the wider world.

Pleasant Gathering in Oakland, Cal.

A group of more than one hundred people interested in Icelandic culture and traditions gathered at a dinner and dance Dec. 3, in Oakland, California, with **Rev. S. O. Thorlaksson**, consul of Iceland in San Francisco, as master of ceremonies. Participants were Icelanders who have homes in northern California or are university students, visitors or travellers, and even a larger

number of Americans of Icelandic descent. A number of the ladies wore Icelandic national dress.

A message from **Hon. Thor Thors**, Iceland's Minister to the United States was read and the pleasant programme was featured by the singing of Icelandic songs, including traditional folk songs.

Asa Wright and Her Plantation in Trinidad, B.W.I.

by W. J. LINDAL

It is well known that Icelanders scatter far and wide. In Canada one hears of them in the most unexpected places—in northern Quebec and in small towns in Nova Scotia. To come across an Icelander permanently resident in the tropics would cause some surprise; to discover an Icelander owning and operating a large plantation on a tropical island would be regarded as something very unique; but to find that the owner and operator of such a plantation is a woman is little short of a revelation. What better evidence can there be of the true nature and the permanence of the viking spirit?

Ása Guðmundsdóttir was born in Iceland on April 12, 1892. She is the daughter of the late Guðmundur Guðmundsson, a doctor who practised medicine in Stykkishólmur, on the west coast of Iceland, for over a quarter of a century. Her grandfather on the father's side was a minister who served at Stóruvöllum in Landssveit not far from Mount Hekla.

Ása's father was a typical country doctor. He completed his training in medicine in Copenhagen and on coming back to Iceland settled at first in Árnes district, east of Reykjavík, where he practised for about eight years. He spent a year in England and Scotland acquiring additional training. When he retired in 1927 he was residing in Stykkishólmur village.

Though a professional man, Dr. Guðmundsson was always close to the common people of Iceland and felt that the best in the Icelandic people derived from the rural areas. One Þor-



ÁSA GUÐMUNDSDÓTTIR in Iceland,
at the age of twenty-two

bergur Þórðarson wrote a biography of the late Rev. Árni Þórarinnsson. In that biography Dr. Guðmundsson is reported to have made this revealing observation:

"I am a descendant of professional and civil service people for eleven generations. What a hell of a treatment it is not to be able to rest upon one solid farmer's lineage".

Ása's grandmother on the father's side, Ingibjörg, was a daughter of a district dean in the Church of Iceland.

Ása's mother was Arndís Jónsdóttir. Her father, Jón Pétursson, was Chief Justice of Iceland. Arndís, who died in 1936, is reputed to have been a woman of superior qualities.

In 1914 Ása Guðmundsdóttir met an English lawyer on a ship which was travelling to Iceland. Henry Newcombe Wright was at the time studying for his Doctorate in Law and resided in London. The subject he selected for his thesis was early law and religion in England. To round out his studies and investigations he decided to visit Thingvellir, the site of the ancient Parliament of Iceland, Alþingi. Ása married him in 1918 and Mr. and Mrs. Wright settled in London where he practised law for some years. His health was not good and he moved to Cornwall, the extreme southwestern county of England, probably to get away from the London fog. There he practised until the end of the Second World War. Mrs. Wright not only attended to her household duties but took personal charge of extensive alterations and improvements in their picturesque country home. Photographs of their Cornwall residence, after the remodelling, show that someone with architectural taste had given direction in planning the work.

When the war in the European theatre was over Mr. Wright was sent on an assignment to Bolivia for the British Government. On his way to Bolivia and back he spent some time in Trinidad, the southernmost island of the British West Indies. The warm climate and moist air seemed to agree particularly well with him and he decided that he would spend the rest of his life in Trinidad. A friend of his owned a plantation, or an estate as they are now called, of two hundred acres situated about twenty miles from

the Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad. His friend offered to lease it to Mr. Wright. Although the estate was in a badly run down condition Mr. Wright preferred to buy rather than



MRS. H. W. WRIGHT in formal Court Dress,
London, England

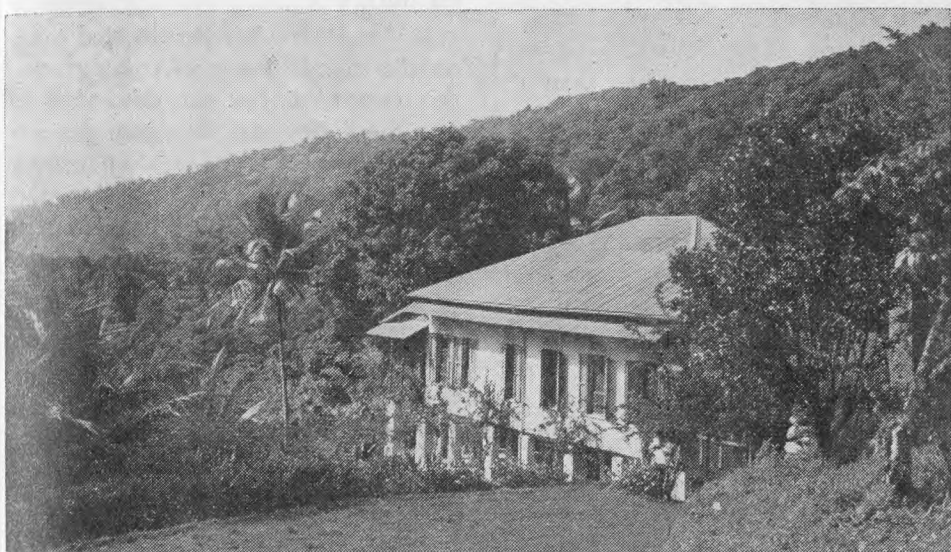
lease. He thus became the owner of Spring Hall Estate in Arima Valley, Trinidad.

Mr. and Mrs. Wright decided to move before winter set in and they arrived in Trinidad in December, 1945.

They brought her father, Dr. Guðmundsson, with them, by then 92 years of age. Even though very feeble, he was determined to go. He died the following year.

The Spring Hill Estate covers a part of the slope of the Arima Valley

Negroes and the others East Indians. By way of parenthesis it might be mentioned that the Negroes are descendants of slaves brought in from Africa by Spaniards, who were the first whites to settle in Trinidad. The Indians are mostly the descendants of



SPRING HILL ESTATE — showing the east front of the residence which extends back than would appear. Note the luxurious growth even on top of the ridge in the background.

and reaches down to the level ground below. The plantation residence nestles in the side of the upper part of the valley and from the veranda there is a beautiful view of the valley below and the terrain on both sides.

The Wrights very soon discovered that extensive work had to be done to bring the plantation back to production. The fruit and other trees had not received any care for some time and the buildings were in bad repair. Work was commenced at once and Mrs. Wright did her full share as indeed had been her custom owing to her husband's less robust constitution.

A number of men and women, all dark, were employed. Some were

Untouchable East Indians. They were brought in under a form of contract called an indenture by Britishers after Great Britain had seized Trinidad from Spain.

The task of rehabilitation of the Estate was tremendous and it may have overtaxed Henry Wright. His health did not improve as he had anticipated, and besides the Grim Reaper was at work. He died in December 1955, and Mrs. Wright was left to manage the whole estate. There unfortunately were no children.

Mrs. Wright, however, has proven equal to the task. In Icelandic she would be described as a "mesti kven-skörungur". She is not, as in some cases,

a widow hurled into the responsibilities of handling her husband's estate. She is carrying on what had to a large extent been under her supervision from the time the Wrights first took possession of the Spring Hill Estate.

During the last ten years the operating of the estate has been largely a question of expenditures with very little revenue. It was more than the rehabilitation of a run-down plantation. Old trees had to be pruned, saplings planted, new varieties brought in. Then there was the question of communication and transportation. There is no telephone line to the estate and to hew one through will be a matter of considerable expense. Then the roads. The buildings are about five miles from a main highway and a road had to be pushed through. That proved very costly as the road goes along the side of the valley and has to cross gulleys and make sharp turns as it winds around the irregular flank of the valley. Mrs. Wright supervised most of the work running her tractor over terrain which many a male would hesitate to cross. She now drives her tractor over the narrow sharply turning and steeply dipping road as if she had been in charge of a jeep in the last war.

Many interesting incidents could be related which have happened on the Spring Hill Estate during the last ten years but space permits of only one.

Down in the lowest part of the estate there is a cave in which can be found bats and other species of life, including that very rare bird called the "guacharo", sometimes called "Oil-bird" by the natives. It is "one of those ornithological mysteries that may never be solved to everybody's satis-

faction".* It has the habits of an owl in that it flies at night and during the day it sleeps in caves. But it does not, like the owl, prey on birds or mice and sweep down on them under cover of darkness. The guacharo does not eat meat. It flies out at night to feed on nuts!

Mr. and Mrs. Wright decided to enter the cave in hopes of coming across this rare bird. For the descent down into the valley and then into the cave Mrs. Wright chose to don tropical slacks. She maintains that on no other occasion has she worn slacks or overalls.



MRS. WRIGHT holding a live boa-constrictor

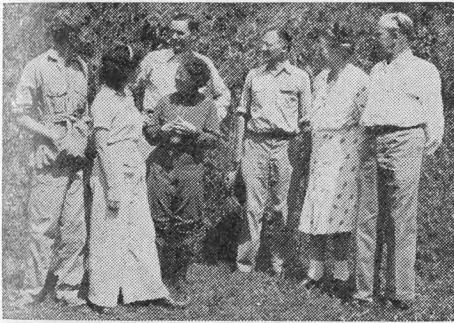
There was a slight interruption on the trip to the cave. The Wrights came across a small boa-constrictor. That snake is quite harmless unless it gets a chance to embrace something in its own pattern of affection. Mrs.

* Ditmars and Bridges "Snake-hunter's Holiday".

Wright was not disturbed. After a little manipulating she managed to hold up the helpless snake at the end of a bamboo stick and smilingly waited until her husband had taken a picture. The ultimate fate of the snake is not recorded.

The Spring Hill Estate is known for its birds and beautiful orchids rather than for its snakes. Raymond L. Ditmars and William Bridges, when on a snake hunting expedition in the Caribbean, visited the Spring Hill Estate in the nineteen-thirties and in their book reported as follows:

"Spring Hill Estate is a naturalists' paradise. It lies in the heart of the high Northern Range, hemmed in and pressed upon by luxuriant jungle that has scarcely been mapped and certainly is overrun with wild life of all kinds."



Ornithologists from the United States on the Spring Hill Estate. Mr. and Mrs. Wright are on the extreme right

Not only snake-hunters but ornithologists and other naturalists have frequently visited the Spring Hill Estate. One group of ornithologists from the United States visited the Estate in 1952 and shortly before, a party of American naturalists. On such occasions the Wrights accompanied the visitors on their expeditions into

the jungle and entertained them in their plantation home. One visitor came from Iceland, Niels Dungal, Professor of Pathology in the University of Iceland. Orchids are his hobby which he grows in a greenhouse in Reykjavík. He made a special trip to Trinidad to visit Mrs. Wright and observe orchids in their wild as well as in their cultivated state.

Mrs. Wright grows some tropical vegetables and garden fruit but they are not her source of revenue. She has some poultry including turkeys, and a few peacocks display their feathers and bright colors in the yard. She raises about thirty pigs a year. They are small and thin, a characteristic of all animals in Trinidad and probably elsewhere in the tropics.

Although away from Iceland for about forty years Ása Wright speaks remarkably good Icelandic. She brought a number of books with her and, strange though it may appear, she has a copy of Sigurður Breiðfjörð's "Núma-rímur". She quoted two favorite verses. In her possession there is a very old map of Iceland. It is probably a duplicate of the one Rev. Eric Sigmar came across in Sweden, referred to in his address published in this number of the magazine. In both, the most prominent features are the old religious and educational centres, Hólar and Skálholt.

N.B. The second part of this article will appear in the Summer issue. It will be devoted to the revenue producing products of the Spring Hill Estate and the indispensable "Mamma" or "Umbrella" trees and will refer to Mrs. Wright's ambition to establish a market in Iceland for her super-quality strain of coffee beans.

(To be continued)

The Front Cover Verses

The author, Thorsteinn Gíslason, may be regarded as one of the early twentieth century literary men of Iceland (1867-1938). In his book, "Icelandic Poems and Stories" Dr. Richard Beck summarizes the many-sided literary faculties of Thorsteinn Gíslason as follows:

"At the time of his death, he had for years been recognized and highly respected as the dean of Icelandic journalists. He was a versatile and prolific writer, an essayist and a lyric poet as well as a journalist, and a notable translator of both prose and verse.

"Gíslason excelled in occasional poems, and many of his memorial poems are exceptionally well done. His descriptive and nature poems are noteworthy, but his purest poetry is found in some of his simple lyrics."

The front cover verses are the first two of five verses in a poem entitled in the original, "Vordægur". In Iceland, perhaps even more than elsewhere, springtime has been the subject of beautiful lyric poetry. The original follows:

VORDÆGUR

Ljósíð loftin fyllir
og loftin verða blá.
Vorið tánum tyllir
tindana á.

Dagarnir lengjast
og dimman flýr í sjó;
bráðum syngur lóa
í brekku og mó.

Og lambgrasið ljósa
litkar mel og barð.
Og sóleyjar spretta
sunnan við garð.

Þá flettir sól af fjöllumum
fannanna strút;
í kaupstað verður farið
og kýrnar leystar út.

Bráðum glóey gyllir
geimana blá.
Vorið tánum tyllir
tindana á.

★

Advantage is taken of the occasion to refer to the translator of the two first verses, the late Professor Skuli Johnson. At the time he so suddenly passed away, June 1, 1955, the magazine was almost ready for the press and all that could be done within the limited time was to publish a well merited encomium, but without facts or details. The intention of the Editorial Board had been to publish an article at a later date touching upon the literary products of that richly gifted mind. It is, however, much more appropriate that we merely re-produce an article from The Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada, by another equally gifted Canadian man of letters, Dr. Watson Kirkconnell. His article follows on the next page.

SKULI JOHNSON

1888—1955

Skuli Johnson was born September 6, 1888, the son of Sveinn and Kristín (Sigurdardóttir) Johnson, in a tiny coastal village in the north of Iceland in the district called Hunavatnssysla. The family migrated to Canada when he was one year old and homesteaded in Saskatchewan near Churchbridge. When Skuli was still a very small boy, his farmer-father died, and no conspicuous future could have been predicted for the orphaned son of a recent immigrant.

A door of opportunity opened when his aunt and uncle in Winnipeg took him into their home and sent him to the excellent public schools in that city. Intelligence and industry issued in notable achievement. At the Isbister School, he won scholarship awards in Latin, English, Greek, and Mathematics. In first-year Arts at Wesley College, University of Manitoba, he won university honours in these same four subjects and also in French and in Roman History. In his second university year, he won a combined scholarship for Latin, English, Greek History, and Philosophy. In his third year, he broke all precedents for a Junior by being chosen as Rhodes Scholar for Manitoba.

His Oxford college was Oriel. Here he enrolled in "Literae Humaniores" and again attained first-class honours. He was described by one of his professors as "a man of indomitable love of learning and industry in its pursuit."

His subsequent years were wholly

given over to teaching and to scholarly writing. After two years (1913—15) as classical master at St. John's Technical High School in Winnipeg, he joined the staff of Wesley College, an affiliated institution of the University of Manitoba, first as a lecturer in Classics, and then, in 1917, as Professor of Classics. In 1920 he became Dean of the Faculty of Arts. In January, 1927, he became Professor of Classics in the University of Manitoba, a post which he held up to the time of his death on June 1, 1955. All his old associates can bear witness to his scholarship, his teaching ability, and his fine qualities of character. A spontaneous testimony meeting of some twenty minutes duration occurred in Section II of the Royal Society in June, 1955, when his recent death was announced and Fellow after Fellow rose to recall the merits of the vanished colleague.

Skuli Johnson was a typical Icelander in his intellectual enthusiasms. That remarkable subarctic race, formed by mixing three parts of Viking with one of Irish, has had a great literary tradition coming down for more than a millennium since the island's first settlement in A.D. 874. Poetry has been its major preoccupation, although Iceland's prose sagas have been characterized as Europe's greatest literary achievement between Vergil and Dante. Far more than any other Occidental nation, the Icelanders have been fascinated by problems of poetic form and have sought to combine the alliteration of their Scandinavian fore-

fathers with the assonances and internal rhymes of Irish prosody and the rhymes, rhythms, and stanza patterns of France, England, and Italy. In a mediaeval phase of their poetry they also pushed imagism and metaphor beyond all limits of comprehension. The result has been poetic craftsmanship of incredible complexity and rigidity. Familiarity with the rules of the prosodic game is expected of even the humblest farmer and fisherman.

Skuli Johnson was intimately acquainted with this tradition. He had visited Iceland during his Oxford days and taught the Icelandic language at university level, along with Latin and Greek, during his years as a professor at Wesley College. Verse translations from Icelandic into English had an irresistible attraction for him and for thirty years he kept supplying his skillful versions to Winnipeg's two Icelandic weeklies, **Lögberg** and **Heims-kringla**. He was a major contributor to **Icelandic Lyrics**, edited by Richard Beck in 1930 and published in Reykjavik in connection with the thousandth anniversary of Iceland's parliament. Still other items in prose and verse were contributed to **Scandinavia**, the **Icelandic Canadian**, and the **American Scandinavian Review**. He himself was editor of **Iceland's Thousand Years**, a series of popular lectures on the history and literature of Iceland published by The Icelandic Canadian Club in 1945. It is in keeping with this achievement that he was elected honorary president of the Icelandic Canadian club and was made a Knight of the Royal Order of the Falcon by the Government of Iceland.

This same passion for experiments in poetic form led him to turn the four books of Horace's **Odes** from

Latin into a wide range of English metres. In 1952, a few specimens from this comprehensive manuscript were published by the University of Toronto Press as **Selected Odes of Horace**; but those of us who had heard the full repertory at sessions of the University's "Saturday Club" in the 1930's found the little printed volume very fragmentary indeed. Another phase of his classical studies involved tireless microscopic research into the minutiae of Latin and Greek texts. In a typical paper of this sort, the erudite footnotes might run to a hundred or more and occupy several times as much space as the article itself. Such were the learned essays that he contributed to the **Classical Journal**, the **American Journal of Philology**, and the **Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada**. He was elected a Fellow of Section II in 1954. At the time of his death he was also a member of the Humanities Research Council of Canada.

In keeping with Icelandic tradition, Skuli Johnson was a skilled athlete. As an undergraduate he had taken part successfully in every branch of athletics. At Oxford, he was secretary of the Lacrosse Club and played lacrosse for Oxford against Cambridge in 1911. In golf, he often preferred to play his eighteen holes with only a mid-iron and a putter, avoiding in his flawless progress down the fairways the hooks and slices perpetrated by those of us who used a larger set of tools and ended up with a poorer score.

He was married in 1921 to Evelyn Truesdale of Winnipeg; and is survived by his wife and two sons, Harold and Richard.

Watson Kirkconnell

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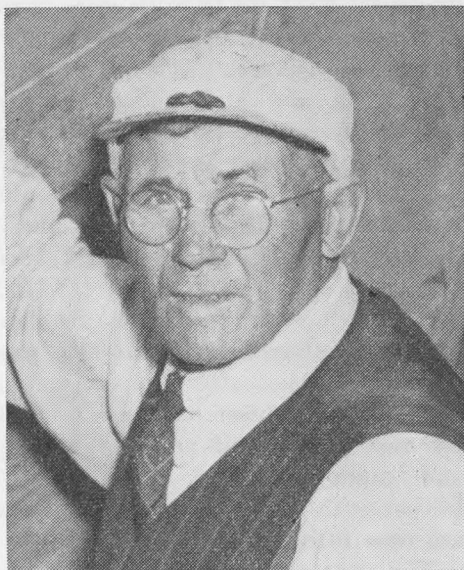
Captain Johann Sigurdur

The death of Capt Johann Sigurdur at Selkirk Hospital, on September 25, last, at the age of eighty-five, marks the end of a chapter in the history of steamboating on Lake Winnipeg. For "Captain Joe", as he was called by one and all who knew him, was the last of those who pioneered as sailing masters on the lake, long before the lake had been charted, and before lighthouses and other aids to navigation, which we have today, had been set up.

Those early navigators had to learn Lake Winnipeg in much the same way as Mark Twain tells us that would-be pilots had to learn the Mississippi. They had to memorize the location of hidden rocks, sand bars and shallows, narrow river channels and not least, learn to weather those sudden squalls which have made Lake Winnipeg notorious.

Captain Sigurdur came to Canada with his family in 1876. He settled near Gimli but some years later moved to the town of Selkirk. At that time, and for years afterwards, Selkirk was a busy lake port with a large fleet of steamers, big and small, engaged in fishing, lumbering and general transportation. It was on these boats that Capt. Joe served his apprenticeship and then for a half century as Captain. He was at one time or another in charge of most of them.

Captain Joe never had a serious mishap in his many years on the lake. He was a quiet, reserved, unassuming man, never a 'mixer' but popular and well liked by those who got to know him.



Captain Johann Sigurdur

He was a teetotaler—and this included tobacco as well as alcoholic beverages. He had a way of command without raising his voice; his usual calm demeanor inspired confidence. In these respects he was unlike so many sailing masters depicted in fiction. He had a thorough knowledge of his job and of the lake and he never seemed happier than when he was on the lake, whether in calm or storm. — J. G. J.

AN APPEAL CONCERNING ICELANDIC BOOKS

As is generally known, the Icelandic Collection at the University of Manitoba Library has in recent years received donations of many valuable books. Indeed, the collection has been gradually built up by such gifts from institutions, individuals, and the Icelandic Government.

When a new and modern library building was erected on the University campus a few years ago the University authorities felt that something should be done to accomodate these Icelandic books and allocated them very adequate space. Furthermore, Mrs. Helga P. Sigurbjörnsson, a member of the Cataloguing Department, was assigned to look after the collection. Mrs. Sigurbjörnsson has now worked for two and a half years organizing and cataloguing the Icelandic collection, with the result that its holdings are now fully known.

The next step, therefore, will be to fill the most serious gaps and thus improve the collection as much as possible.

Undoubtedly many of the books still lacking are at present to be found in private possession in various places on this continent and would probably be available as donations to the University if the individuals concerned were approached in this matter.

The main trouble, on the other hand, is that very few people have a list of their books. When the original owners die these books pass to their descendants, many of whom have little knowledge of Icelandic and are unaware of the titles and contents of these books.

A plan has therefore been worked out by the university in co-operation with the Icelandic National League. It is proposed to make an appeal to those Icelanders (or their descendants) on this continent, who are willing to donate Icelandic books. The proposed method of procedure is as follows:

1. The books will be donated to the University of Manitoba, but those books not needed to complete gaps in its Icelandic Collection will be made available to the Icelandic National League as shown below.
2. If requested to do so, the University will pay the cost of transportation of the books.
3. On arrival at the University of Manitoba Library the books will be checked and such of them as are not already in the Icelandic Collection will be retained there.
4. Duplicate copies will be forwarded to the Icelandic National League which will make them available to Icelandic Collections at other universities on this continent. Any valuable books still remaining will be shipped to a dealer in Iceland who will sell them on a commission basis. The revenue thus acquired will finally be used for the purchase of new Icelandic books for the benefit of the Icelandic reading public on this continent.

In this way eventual contributors will accomplish two things:

- a) Support the Icelandic Collection of the University of Manitoba Library and similar collections at other Universities, and
- b) Further the reading of Icelandic

literature in North America.

This appeal is naturally not made to those individuals who still read and enjoy their books because the books are nowhere in better hands than theirs. It is only addressed to those who no longer derive profit or pleasure from their Icelandic books and may be more than willing to dispose of them.

Anyone interested in this appeal is asked to communicate with the undersigned or Mrs. Helga P. Sigbjörnsson, % The Icelandic Collection, University of Manitoba Library, Winnipeg 9, Manitoba.

On behalf of the University of Manitoba and the Icelandic National League.

Finnbogi Guðmundsson

SANCTUARY

Life is bitter; life is sweet.
The path is smooth, and strewn with boulders.
The world is either at your feet
Or on your shoulders.

He goes mad who strives always
To serve mankind, all men his brothers;
And who does nothing all his days
He maddens others.

I am torn between the two
From too much love, and lack of hate,
And loving man, and loving you,
I alternate.

There is a sea where few men pass
To wash the world's blood off their hands
Where old Time broke his hourglass
And spilled the sands.

And there my quietness shall be
Between the storms of man and war
Where Time has left eternity
In heaps upon the shore.

—Esther Wellington

Frank Thorolfson—First Canadian Adjudicator

The Kiwanis Musical Festival, Toronto, Ont., announced some time ago the appointment of Mr. Thorolfson as one of the five adjudicators for their music festival which was held February 13–25 last. In the past four full-time British adjudicators have been appointed for this festival, which is regarded as the largest music-festival in the world, with the addition of three part time adjudicators from Canada or the United States. This time it was decided to try to find one Canadian with sufficient versatility to be on an equal basis with the four from Britain, thus replacing the other three part time adjudicators. For this heavy responsibility Frank Thorolfson was selected. In the words of Mr. E. G. Pridham, immediate past president of the Kiwanis Music Festival, "We feel that we have found this man in Frank Thorolfson. We know him to be a great musician and an experienced and kindly adjudicator, a combination not always easy to find. Frank was highly recommended to us by Mr. John Churchill, Master of Music at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, England, with whom he spent a week or so last year adjudicating in Western Canada. Mr. Churchill was high in his praise of Frank's musicianship and told me he had never so thoroughly enjoyed working with a man as he had with Frank."

Mr. Thorolfson will also adjudicate at other musical festivals in Ontario and Saskatchewan. He has in previous

years had considerable success in adjudicating at various music festivals in Western Canada.

At present Mr. Thorolfson is organist and choirmaster at Knox-Metropolitan Church in Regina, Saskatchewan and conductor of the Regina Ladies Choir.

Mr. Howard Leyton-Brown, director of the Regina Conservatory of Music, announced in February that Mr. Frank Thorolfson had joined the staff of the Regina Conservatory of Music. He will teach organ, piano and singing, and will also have an opera workshop training singers for one act performances of opera.

Last year Mr. Thorolfson was commissioned by the Saskatchewan Government to compose an opera in commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Province of Saskatchewan. The premiere of his two-act opera, "The Qu'Appelle River Legend", will take place in Regina, April 20, 21 and 23rd, this year.

The Icelandic Canadian congratulates Mr. Thorolfson on these, his latest successes. In the Manitoban in 1946, in a commentary on a concert of the Winnipeg Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Mr. Thorolfson, the critic said: "He is a Winnipeg musician who should attain national recognition". His words have come true.

See the Icelandic Canadian autumn issues in 1946 and 1948 for his Icelandic background and for other achievements in the field of music.

—Mattie Halldorson

BOOK REVIEW

Autobiography of a Damned Fool

By Art Reykdal

Pauper Press, Winnipeg, pp. 361

This rather unusual book is written by a young man well known to readers of this magazine as a member of its editorial staff and an occasional contributor. The book is not an autobiography in the accepted sense of the term and objection may be taken to its startling title on that account. It is rather a collection of pieces in prose and verse dealing with various unrelated topics in an amusing, if inconsequential fashion. The writing is characterized by facility of phrase, a good sense of rhythm and broad humour, which, if more sparingly and tastefully used, could be very effective.

The prose pieces, which make up about two-thirds of this stout volume, touch on such things as the author's childhood memories, his abortive career as a newspaperman and publisher of doomed magazines, his tribulations as a printer's apprentice and as a tenderfoot on a Lake Winnipeg fishing station. Of these the Lake Winnipeg chapters are much the best. The author describes very well the more rowdy and superficial aspects of the lake fisherman's existence and such pieces as Nautical Novice, Cannibal Island and Barney's Point make good reading. The same may be said of his rollicking, bawdy ballads on the same subject in the chapter Lakeside Lyrics. The article, Journalistic Jamboree, also deserves mention for it shows well the author's utter contempt for the

prosaic business of earning a living by means of the written word and indeed for all discipline's endeavour of a practical nature.

A word or two must be said about the article, What Price Tradition? which relates the author's quixotic attempt to revive in this country the Icelandic form of wrestling. For his great devotion to this cause he deserves the highest praise from all who have the preservation of our racial traits and customs at heart. Here should also be mentioned the cleverly written and informative, Grettir Club.

Of the poetry which covers some one hundred pages not much needs be said. The author is a skilled rhymist and had he written in Icelandic would be recognized as a good *hagyrðingur*. Except for the jesting Lake ballads referred to above, few of the rest have much to recommend them as entertainment or otherwise.

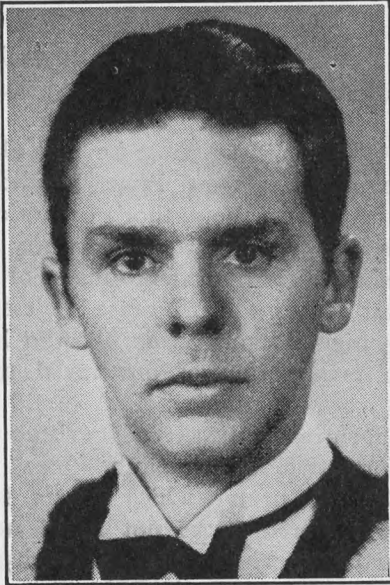
The printing and general appearance of the book reflects much credit on the author who is also the printer and publisher. Many of the pictures are good and some have historical value.

It is to be hoped that the author will soon outgrow his youthful faults and that this magazine may in due course have occasion to review another book of his, entitled perhaps: The Rehabilitation of a Damned Fool.

The book sells at \$5.00 and may be ordered from Art Reykdal, 979 Ingersoll St. Winnipeg.

—H. Th.

Wins V.L.A. Competition



Swain Westdal

Swain Westdal of Swan River, Man., won highest honours in a farm management plan competition at a Veterans' Land Act conference held in Winnipeg on March 1, and was chosen by the conference to represent Manitoba in the larger Western Ontario

Conference which opened in Toronto on March 12th.

The Winnipeg Free Press of March 2, in referring to the Manitoba Conference selection, said in part:

"His plan, drawn up for a 160-acre farm in the Swan River Valley, was selected over that of James Stewart of Winnipeg in the final competition.

Mr. Westdal's plan called for increased livestock production and a modified eight year crop rotation program. After two or three years, all course grains produced on the farm would be utilized for livestock feed and only wheat would be sold.

The crop rotation program was selected as one which would give ample forage and pasture. It suggested three years of brome grass and alfalfa, wheat, oats, barley, sweet clover and summer fallow.

Swain Westdal left for Toronto on March 11, and this magazine wishes him success at the Toronto conference. Mr. Westdal is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Westdal, 652 Home St., Winnipeg. —I. J.

"Kiljansvaka" Held in Honor of Nobel Prize Winner

On the evening of the day the now famed author Halldór Kiljan Laxness was presented with the Nobel prize for literature in Stockholm, by the King of Sweden, a group of Icelanders gathered in the Federated Church in Winnipeg to mark the event and the honor. The gathering termed "Kiljansvaka" was sponsored by the chapter

Frón of the Icelandic National League. During the program excerpts from the works of Laxness were read, and Prof. Finnbogi Guðmundsson gave an address in which he presented an outline of the life and works of the noted author. Excerpts were selected and read by Dr. Áskell Löve, Björn and Helga Sigurbjörnsson.

Dr. Lee M. Hollander

Dr. Lee M. Hollander, Professor of Germanics at the University of Texas, was a visitor to Winnipeg in February on the invitation of the Department of Icelandic Language and Literature in the University of Manitoba. Dr. Hollander, who obtained his Doctor of Philosophy degree from John Hopkins University in 1905, has devoted his life to the study of Germanics. He has made a special study of the Older Edda and in 1928 published his own translation of the Eddic poems. He and Carl F. Bayerschmidt, executive officer of the Department of German Language and Literature at Columbia University, made a new approach to the translating of the Sagas in their very skillful and lucid translation of Njál's Saga (American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1955). It is a vast improvement upon that of George W. Dasent. Dr. Hollander has been a generous contributor to Scandinavian Studies and is a member of the Advisory Committee.

On Monday February 6, Prof. Hollander delivered an address in the University of Manitoba on the Eddic poems and that same evening delivered another address in the Federated

Church under the auspices of The Icelandic National League.

The Icelandic people, both in Iceland and on this continent, are in-



Dr. Lee M. Hollander

debted to Dr. Hollander for his intense interest in the Eddas and other Old Icelandic literature. He is doing much to bring that ancient and distant literature before the English speaking world.

—W. J. L.

Brilliant Student Wins Bursaries

Duncan Thomas McWhirter, a second year honor student in Political Science and Economics at the University of Toronto, was in October last awarded two bursaries: a \$250.00 Council of University College Bursary and a \$150.00 Dandill Wilson Residence

Bursary. Duncan McWhirter is a son of Mr. and Mrs. R. J. McWhirter of 742 Bessie Ave. Fort William, Ont. His mother, Gudrun is a daughter of Soffia and the late Thomas Benjaminson of Lundar, Man.

THE THREE MIDWINTER CONCERTS

The three day annual convention of The Icelandic National League was held, as usual, on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of the third week in February. In association with the convention three concerts are held, one on each of the nights of the three days of the convention. The concerts were unusually successful and well attended this year.

The first one, held in the First Lutheran Church on Victor Street, was under the auspices of "Frón" the Winnipeg Chapter of the League. There was a varied and interesting programme. Elma Gislason (Mrs. Ragnar Gislason) sang twice and was encored both times. Rev. Eric and Mrs. Sigmar sang two duets and Rev Sigmar sang solos. Their selections were well received but they declined to sing encores. A boy, Carl Thorsteinson played two selections on the piano. He has promise. Two original poems were rendered, one by Dr. Sveinn Bjornson, formerly of Arborg and Ashern and now of Winnipeg, and Einar P. Jonsson, Editor of Logberg. The main speaker of the evening was Rev. Johann Fredriksson, Lutheran pastor in the Argyle District, who spoke on "Icelandic Heroes". He referred not only to the heroes of old but also to those of modern Iceland and North America. In that way he showed that the qualities of heroism and steadfastness of old have been passed on through the centuries.

The gross receipts for sale of admission to the concert was donated to the Betel Building Fund. Light refreshments and coffee were served in the basement at a nominal charge.

John Johnson, President of Frón occupied the chair at the concert.

The second concert, also in the Victor Street Church, was under the auspices of the Icelandic Canadian Club. Alvin Blondal and Herman Fjeldsted sang duets. They are both good vocalists and their voices blend together very well. S. Lauren Kolbinson of Saskatoon played on the organ. He is one member of a very musical family and although only twenty-four years of age, is a composer and an accomplished piano and organ player. His handling of the organ reminded one of Pall Isólfsson, who played in Westminster Church some years ago. The speaker of the evening was W. Merwyn Johnson M.P. of Kindersley, Sask. As a polished speaker he did more than live up to advance notices. He acquired his training in public speaking in the University of Saskatchewan from which he holds the degrees of B.A. and B.S.A. He was on the debating team which, in 1943, won the McGowan Cup, emblematic of the intervarsity debating championship of Western Canada. In his undergraduate years he was a winner of Van Vliet and Raynor public speaking trophies. Three years ago, at the age of thirty, Merwyn Johnson was elected to the House of Commons in Ottawa.

Both Mr. Johnson and Mr. Kolbinson attended the concert at their own expense, one travelling from Ottawa and the other from Saskatoon. The ladies of the social committee and other lady members of The Icelandic Canadian club, provided refreshments which were served in the lower auditorium of the church after the concert.

The gross receipts for admission to the concert and the voluntary and very liberal collection downstairs were donated to the Betel Building Fund.

J. T. Beck, the President of the Icelandic Canadian club, was in the chair.

The third concert was held on Wednesday night in the Federated Church on Banning Street. A young man, Harold Olsen, played on the trumpet and Erlingur Eggertson, a graduate in law last spring with honors, sang Icelandic songs. Mr. Eggertson, who has a fine voice, is at present studying Icelandic, Italian and German in order to be able to sing in those languages as well as in English. The speaker of the evening was Kristján Albertsson of Iceland. He has been in the diplomatic service for many years and at present is the representative of Iceland at U. N. headquarters in New York. Mr. Albertsson speaks French very fluently

and was the Minister for Iceland in Paris for many years. He also speaks German, English and Danish. He is a journalist by profession and, as was to be expected, is a master of Icelandic. His subject was "Einar Benediktsson" one of Iceland's leading poets of the early twentieth century.

Light refreshments were served in the lower auditorium by the Ladies Aid of the Federated Church, the generous collection being donated to the Betel Building Fund.

Rev. P. M. Petursson, vice-president of the League, was in the chair during this concert and the President. Rev. V. J. Eylands, presided at the closing of the three day convention of the Icelandic National League.

In view of the cause for which the concerts were held both the churches were provided free of charge.

W. J. L.

Northern California Icelandic Group Meet in Oakland

A group of more than one hundred persons interested in Icelandic culture and traditions enjoyed a most pleasant evening of dinner and dancing on December last, at a colorful restaurant on Jack London Square, Oakland, California. The participants were Icelanders who have homes in Northern California or who are university students, visitors, or travelers, together with an even larger number of Americans of Icelandic ancestry.

The location of this party was especially attractive. The restaurant overlooks the harbor on one side, and on the other a brightly lighted square decorated with a tall illuminated Christmas tree. A number of the ladies present wore the Icelandic national

dress at this party, adding greatly to the holiday spirit.

The program was opened by the singing of the national anthems of the United States and of Iceland. A message of greetings from Iceland's Ambassador to the U.S.A., His Excellency Mr. Thor Thors, was read by Rev. S. O. Thorlaksson, Iceland's Consul in San Francisco. Rev. Thorlaksson also served as Master of Ceremonies for the program, and introduced visitors and people who recently have arrived in the San Francisco Bay area. Among these were: Mr. Guddy Einarsson of Glenboro, Manitoba, Dr. and Mrs. Bjarni Jonsson of the University of California, Mr. Ralph E. and Mrs. Ingibjörg Johnson,

Lt. and Mrs. Gene Nelson (Erla Karlsdóttir), and Mr. Jens Pálsson. A double quartet of men sang three Icelandic songs, one a quint song (tví-Söngur), and led the entire group in singing traditional Icelandic folk songs. The numbers offered by the singers were "Sjá roðann á hnjúkunum háu", "Eg bið að heilsa", and "Ísland, farsælda frón". The singers were: Steintor Guðmunds, Barney Hermann, Vigfus Helgason, Vigfus Jakobsson, Lyman E. Lorensen, Carl Magnusson, Sveinn Olafsson. This group was directed and accompanied by Mrs. Louise Guðmunds.

Dr. Andres Fjelsted Oddstad, President of the American-Icelandic Association of Northern California, expressed the wish of the entire group to send greetings from this gathering to the Icelandic nation as well as to our many individual friends there and in Canada. The function of these social

meetings, he stated, is to provide opportunities for Icelanders to enjoy each other's fellowship and to preserve the fine Icelandic cultural features which make for better citizenship in persons whatever their nationality backgrounds or wherever their residences.

Chairman of the committee which planned the party was Mr. Ingvar Thordarson. He was assisted by Mrs. Kristin Eyjolfsdóttir Thordarson, Dr. A. F. Oddstad, Mrs. Emma Stoneson Oddstad, Rev. S. O. Thorlaksson, Mrs. Carolina K. Gudjonsdóttir Thorlaks-son, Mr. Lyman E. Lorensen, Mrs. Gunnhildur Snorraddóttir Lorensen, Mr. Sveinn Olafsson, Mrs. Asta Loa Bjarnaddóttir Olafsson, Mr. Theodore P. Schweitzer and Mrs. Bergljot Snorraddóttir Schweitzer.

Louise Guðmunds

Representative of The Icelandic Canadian, San Francisco Bay Area

THE ANNUAL BANQUET AND DANCE OF THE ICELANDIC CANADIAN CLUB

The annual banquet and dance staged by The Icelandic Canadian Club at The Marlborough Hotel measured up to tradition this year. Two students at the Normal School, Lorraine Grescoe and Verna Whitly, entertained with violin and piano selections which were much appreciated. The guest speaker was Rev. Eric Sigmar, who selected a very timely subject, "Skálholt". The ancient bishopric, about sixty miles east of Reykjavík, is being re-established and the formal ceremonies, such as laying the corner stone and other functions, are to take place next summer. The main

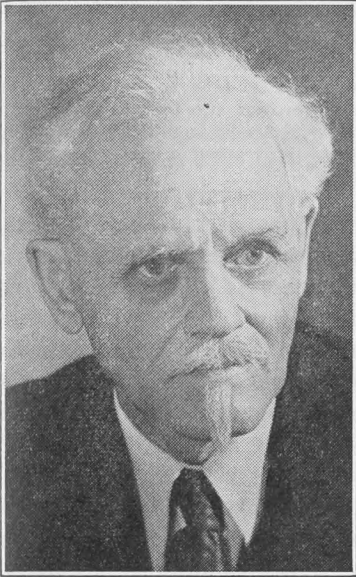
part of Rev. Sigmar's address appears elsewhere in this issue.

Dan Wright entertained at the piano during the dinner hour and Len Patterson's orchestra played for the dance.

★

Mrs. V. Bjorg Isfeld of Winnipeg was elected Regent of the Jon Sigurdson Chapter, Independent Order of the Daughters of the Empire, at the annual meeting of chapter members, held on Feb. 3, last. Mrs. Isfeld, who has been prominent both provincially and nationally in musical circles, succeeded Mrs. Flora Benson as head of the Chapter.

GÍSLI JONSSON—eighty



than its present editor, **Gísli Jonsson**, who celebrated his 80th birthday in February this year at his Winnipeg home.

It is now 42 years since Mr. Jonsson submitted his first article for publication. It appeared in "Eimreiðin", the leading quarterly of Iceland. The subject of that article was Gunnsteinn Eyjólfsson, who came to Canada and settled in what was then called "Nýja Ísland". Gunnsteinn Eyjólfsson was a self-educated man, a composer of music and a writer of some stature—a subject that would appeal to Gísli Jonsson. Ever since that time, 42 years ago, Gísli Jonsson has resounded the glories of Iceland and her people, at home and abroad, in poetry and prose and has earned from his countrymen well merited tribute and honor. Mr. Jonsson took over the editorship of the *Tímarit* upon the death of Dr. Rögnvaldur Petursson who had been editor from the time the year book was first published in 1919, until he died on January 30, 1940.

The "*Tímarit*", a year book published by the Icelandic National League, has long been a source of information and inspiration to Icelanders on this continent. No one has contributed more faithfully and even brilliantly to that high quality year book

Laura Goodman Salverson, well-known Icelandic Canadian author, wrote her first book, "*Viking Heart*", in 1923. On February 1, this year, a radio drama version of the book was presented over the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation network, the script written by Mrs. Salverson's son, George Salverson, writer for the CBC in Toronto. "*Viking Heart*" is in substance a story of the pioneers who settled what was known as New Iceland, on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, and illustrates graphically the struggles and hardships of those first Icelanders as

they labored to carve out a new life in a land and climate then strange to them.

★

Rev. Harald S. Sigmar, well-known among Western Canadian Icelanders and presently pastor at Kelso, Wash., has accepted a call to St. John's Lutheran Church in Salisbury, North Carolina, which has a congregation of 1,700. Rev. Sigmar was pastor at Gimli, Man., prior to going to Kelso. He had previously served congregations at both Manitoba and Saskatchewan points.

THE BETEL HOME FOR THE AGED

by MRS. J. AUGUSTA TALLMAN

The Icelandic Canadian welcomes the opportunity of supporting the Betel Old Folks Home building campaign for \$140,000, by publishing the following very appropriate introductory article by Mrs. J. Augusta Tallman, matron of the Betel Home. The Magazine Committee realizes, when a worthy project such as this one is under way, how inadequate a quarterly magazine is for such purposes. It therefore endeavors to overcome the inadequacy by pointing out that other articles, completing the picture of Betel and its needs, as well as the one by Mrs. Tallman, are being published in the Icelandic weekly press. It is possible that some of them or a synopsis of them may appear in the summer issue. —Ed.

The word "security" seems of late years to have taken on a fuller meaning, or perhaps it is that it has become better understood. For the very young, and for the aged it has particular significance. Here only the aged are discussed. In the fullness of our strength, the thought of weakness—dependence upon others for our needs—is indeed a foreign thought. But as the waterfall pours itself over the brink in endless, changeless flow, so move the years down the avenues of Time. It is, we notice, not as easy to do the things we used to do. Our strength is more easily spent, and less easily renewed. Can it be that we are growing old?

All at once, it seems, we are left alone. The children have grown to manhood and womanhood, and have one by one gone out into the world to take their place in that world of action, the scene of which we are about to leave behind. Perhaps there are no children and we are quite alone. In either case—what then?

It may be that we find our little ship of life somewhat storm-tossed—the hand at the controls grown weaker. We look about us for a safe harbor. Is it that we see the lights of Homer? Yes, it is and in this instance, it is the Home, Betel, a haven for the aged and weak, which through its years of service has reached in spirit, into the hearts of men, far and wide.

Betel has many behind it and during those years it has gained in experience. At first it was mostly founded upon the rock of faith. Inspired and willing hands builded, it might be said, out of "things not seen" the home that is to-day. The home had its beginning in a large private residence in the city of Winnipeg. Very soon this proved so inadequate that a larger place had to be found. A newly built frame structure in Gimli was procured and the residents were moved to the new location.

Again, the swiftly growing need made even this larger home quite insufficient to meet the demands. The flow of applications grew in volume and the building that to-day is Betel, is the result of the crying need of those years.

But as nothing can stand still, so it is in the case of this Home to-day. Serving, as it has for forty years, the needs of the aged pioneers of Icelandic origin, this Home once more has to be enlarged that it may serve the needs of the increasing number of applicants.

The Home has a proud record which is well known. Having been matron at Betel for five years, 1948-1953, I am very familiar with the quality of service rendered. The staff is at all times most unselfish and no effort is spared to make everyone within its care happy and comfortable. The sick lie in bed for years, receiving such care

that a bed-sore is scarcely known. — Nothing but the best in food is purchased, and excellently prepared. Absolute cleanliness, perfect regularity of routine is the order. The doctor, who serves the Home, gives of his best, in quick and ready service. The minister in charge, gives two religious services a week, is at all times available and ready for any emergency. I have never seen more devotion to duty from all concerned, than what is found in Betel.

The present pattern of service in the home will continue. It was set by those wonderful people who, at its beginning, were ready to give all, to make Betel the good and truly ministering home that it has become.

Now that their task has been performed and the twilight is approaching the residents of The Betel Home for the Aged can truly say:

"From failing hands we throw the torch
Be yours to hold it high."

Dr. Richard Beck, professor of Scandinavian languages and head of the foreign language department at the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks, has been appointed for a three-year term as a member of the advisory committee of the American Poetry League. The appointment was made by Dr. J. V. Chandler of Kingsville, Texas, president of the League and a noted poet. League headquarters are in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

★

B.C. GRADUATE

Victor Leo Isfeld graduated with honors from the University of British Columbia in the spring of 1955, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering. Leo is a son

of Mrs. Emelia Isfeld and the late Albert H. Isfeld, pioneers of the Mozart, Sask. district. Mrs. Isfeld resides at present in Vancouver, B.C.

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